

K A M T S C H A T K A, &c. 215

are taken away. This can only be done by some stranger's first lying with her for once; but as this taking off of sin is looked upon by the *Kamtshadales* as very dishonourable for the man, it was formerly difficult to find one to undertake it; so that the poor widows were at a great loss before our Cossacks came amongst them; since which they have been in no want of strangers to take away their sins. Marriage is forbidden only between father and daughter, mother and son; a son-in-law may marry his mother-in-law, and a father-in-law his daughter-in-law; and first cousins marry frequently. Their divorce is very easy, consisting only in a man's separating beds from his wife: in such cases the man immediately marries another wife, and the woman accepts of another husband, without any further ceremony.

A *Kamtshadale* hath two or three wives, with whom he lies by turns. Sometimes he keeps them all in one hut, and sometimes they live in different huts. With every maid that he marries he is obliged to go through the above-mentioned ceremonies. Though these people are fond of women, yet they are not so jealous as the *Koreki*. In their marriages they do not seem to regard the marks of virginity. Nor are the women more jealous; for two or three wives live with one husband in all harmony: even though he also keeps several concubines. When the women go out they cover their faces with a sort of veil; and if they meet any man upon the road, and cannot go out of the way, they turn their backs to him, and stand 'till he is passed. In their huts they sit behind a mat or a curtain made of nettles; but if they have no curtain, and a stranger comes into the hut, they turn their face to the wall, and continue their work. This is to be understood of those that retain their ancient barbarity; for several of them now begin to be civilized to a certain degree, though all of them still preserve a rude harshness in their manner of speaking.

The Itel'mena

879



Village, 18th-century engraving.

At the time of the first Russian acquaintance with Kamchatka the Itel'mena maintained a primitive-communal order. "Until its subjection to Russian rule," wrote Krasheninnikov, "this wild people lived in a state of complete freedom; it had no masters, was subjected to no laws, and paid tribute to no one. Old and courageous people had superior position in every ostrozhka, but this meant only that their advice was hearkened to. Generally, there was equality among them, no one could issue commands to anyone else, and no one had the right to mete out punishment on his own to anyone." Every village was inhabited by members of one clan. The semidugout housed several related families; the number of its inhabitants sometimes was as high as 100. They were bound by collective production and consumption. The custom of vendetta prevailed.

The woman held a high position in family and social life. Many features of matriarchy persisted in the Itel'men social system. These included the husband's moving into the wife's home, or at least temporary residence in the father-in-law's house; marriage by working for the bride, which involved the groom's moving to her home and performing various tasks. But the matriarchal organization was already in a state of disintegration in the beginning of the 18th century. Constant wars among individual clans and with neighboring peoples, waged for the sake of seizing women and captives, who were partially turned into slaves, intensified this process. The arrival of Russians in Kamchatka led to rapid changes in the economy and life of the Itel'mena.

The religious notions of the Itel'mena, according to 18th-century explorers, and primarily Krasheninnikov, had many elements in common with the beliefs of the Koryaks and Chukchi. These included the idea of the raven-creator, rituals and celebrations connected with the annual economic cycle, whale, bear and other ceremonials, consisting of "treating" and "giving gifts" to the animals killed in the hunt. The most important of these was the fall festival, ending in "purification"—passing through hoops of birch twigs. The Itel'mena believed in evil mountain and forest

342
291
231105
621

[554]

[614]
[342]
[592][562]
[591]
[583]
[782]
[721]
[648][571]
[796]

IN KAMTSCHATKA.

99

Those of winter are less singular; and if
equally large, would exactly resemble the

342

177

352

513

562

habitations of the Russian peasants. These
have been so often described, that it is univer-
sally known how they are constructed and
arranged. The *ibbas* are built of wood;

that is to say, the walls are formed by plac-
ing long trees horizontally upon one an-
other, and filling up the interstices with
clay. The roof slants like our thatched

houses, and is covered with coarse grass, or
rushes, and frequently with planks. The
interior part is divided into two rooms, with
a stove placed so as to warm them both, and

which serves at the same time as a fire-
place for their cookery. On two sides of
the largest room, wide benches are fixed,
and sometimes a sorry couch made of

planks, and covered with bears skin. This
is the bed of the chief of the family: and
the women, who in this country are the
slaves of their husbands, and perform all

the

562 the most laborious offices, think themselves
352 happy to be allowed to sleep in it.

Besides these benches and the bed, there is also a table, and a great number of images of different saints, with which the Kamtschadales are as emulous of furnishing their chambers, as the majority of our celebrated connoisseurs are of displaying their magnificent paintings.

342 The windows, as may be supposed, are
237 neither large or high. The panes are made of the skins of salmon, or the bladders of various animals, or the gullets of sea wolves prepared, and sometimes of leaves of talc; but this is rare, and implies a sort of opulence. The fish skins are so scraped and dressed that they become transparent, and admit a feeble light to the room*;

* They produce an effect somewhat similar to the oiled paper in the windows of our manufactories.

but

/333 cont. /

342 The next Paleo-Asiatic people, the Kamchadal, lived
195 through the winter exclusively in earth yurts at the time of Steller
and Krascheninnikof. One finds a detailed description by the two
travelers and in Steller there is even a plan and a view of the
interior (7). Apart from minor details in its interior arrangement

342
354
[191]

[113]

7. Steller, Beschr. von dem Lande Kamtschatka /Description of the Country of Kamchatka/, Frankfort and Leipzig, 1774, p. 212; Krascheninnikov, "Opis. zemli Kamchatki /A Description of Kamchatka/" Poln. sobr. uchen. putesh. po Rossii, izdav. Imp. Akad. Nauk", Vol. II, St. Petersburg, 1819, p. 37).

/334/ the Kamchadal earth-yurt showed an interesting deviation from the one of the Gilyak in that in it the outer, covered passageway leading to the door became a channel, which, with its interior opening directed toward the hearth in the middle of the yurt, served to produce a strong draft when a fire was made, but afterwards, when the fire had gone out, was closed at its outer end. According to Steller (1), only children were permitted

[419]

1. Op. cit., p. 214.

to crawl in and out of the yurt through this channel (2); the smoke

[114]
[192]
[562]

2. According to Krascheninnikof (op. cit., p. 40), also women and kojektschutsch or kojachttschitsch (Steller, op. cit. p. 351, note), i. e., men who behaved like women on the other hand, if a man had done it, he would have exposed himself to the derision of all those present. As a consequence of garbling the Kamchadal designation for the outer opening of this channel (schoponatsch), the Russian Cossacks call it shupan.